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LIÈGE

# LIÈGE

## ARDENT STS CITY TOUR

*Like a mirror, a map is a way of telling the story of the land we live on, the story of our ancestors, the story of our connections to others, the story of what we have collectively achieved [or failed to achieve]*

Kollektiv Orangotango+

The STS Ardent City Tour invites you to explore the city of Liège on foot, by bike or by tram, and to experience the places and their histories through your senses.

This map - illustrated by Jen Berger and funded by the Interreg GRACE project - highlights 20 of the many other gems that Liège has to offer. These were selected by Spiral members to celebrate the 30th anniversary of their research centre. The map presented here has gradually taken shape based on their proposals and curious wanderings.

As Kollektiv Orangotango+ (2023, pp. 13-14) points out, every map tells a story. The one you hold in your hands is rooted in *Science and Technology Studies*. We recognise that 'every place is part of a network of connections, more or less extensive, that extends beyond the place itself' (Sheller & Urry, 2016). We do not seek to provide an

extensive account but rather describe the territory in a selective and situated manner, with a view to creating stories. Liège, with its various historical and toponymic names - *Leodium, Legia, Liège, Liège, Lidje, Luik and Lüttich* - is also commonly known as the 'Cité ardente' (literally, the 'fiery city'). Like those parchments that have been scraped and reused, on which each new writing is superimposed on previous ones that have been partially erased, it truly is a palimpsest city. This overlapping of urban life is evident in the city's layout, community life, and the constant transformation of its infrastructures.

In Belgium, people often greet Liégeois with the typical Walloon interjection *Oufti*, which expresses surprise, astonishment or relief. (Georges 2022, p.88). Let yourself be surprised too!

### 1. Val-Benoît industrial hub

Quai Banning 6, 4000 Liège



Science in the city. Val Benoît was inaugurated on the site of a former abbey in 1937 to celebrate the centenary of the Ecole des Mines de Liège. Initially built to house the

technical faculties of the University of Liège as part of an urban expansion plan based on collaboration between science and industry, the complex was partially demolished during the Second World War. It was then inaugurated a second time in 1947 to mark the centenary of the Association of Graduate Engineers of the University of Liège. Following the University's move to its new (and current) campus in Sart Tilman in 1967, the site gradually fell into disuse. The ruins of Val Benoît then became a popular venue for students to celebrate their traditional Saint

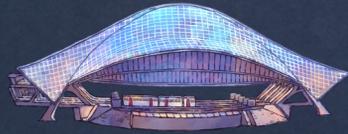
Nicholas Day, while awaiting the future repurposing of the complex. Complex is indeed the word. Toxic residues present in the buildings - resulting from historical experiments conducted by the various faculties - have long slowed down the conversion of the site. Today, the buildings have been turned into a multi-purpose facility comprising training centres, housing and offices. Yet, the obdurate ruins of the chemistry and metallurgy building still unwittingly bridge between eras.

### 2. The Starchitecture of Guillemins Station

Place des Guillemins, 4000 Liège

A ticket to the *retrofuture*. Opened in 2009, the current Liège-Guillemins railway station boasts futuristic and ethereal architecture that plays with movement, curves and transparency. This was exemplified by the ephemeral installation by French artist Daniel Buren, which coloured the glass roof for a year. Is it a stingray, a reclining woman or... a cap? The debate remains open. Meanwhile, its digital twin is integrated into the landscape of

James Gunn's movie *Guardians of the Galaxy*. A monumental gateway to the city, the building is unique in that it has no façade, leaving it open to the elements and encouraging passage rather than use. The avant-garde building meets the need to modernise the railway infrastructure, particularly to accommodate high-speed trains - although some international lines that pass through Liège no longer stop there already. In the face of this "starchitecture" (Ponzi and Nastasi, 2016), designed to embody and respond to the demands of modernity, it is worth questioning what modernity is made of and what it entails.



### 3. The wind of resistance on the "Belle Liégeoise" footbridge

Quai de Rome 1, 4000 Liège

*Avant-garde resistance*. This steel structure with 294 metres of wooden decking acts as a link between the Guillemins railway station and the Boverie park. Completed in 2016, the footbridge is one of many in Liège, with 80 said to exist (Baillly et

al., 2020). This rebel infrastructure is named after Anne-Joséphé Théroigne de Méricourt, a feminist heroine of the French Revolution who aspired to equal rights and was also known as 'the Amazon of liberty' (Godineau, 2024). In March 1792, she urged female citizens to arm themselves and 'break their chains' to escape the 'shameful nullity in which men's ignorance, vanity, and injustice have kept them enslaved for so long' (Hood, 2019). During the 2020-22 SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the "Belle Liégeoise" became a popular meeting place for young people in Liège who wanted to socialise, share ideas, and (musically) protest against the ongoing lockdown restrictions. Another way of organising resistance.



### 12. "Oeil de l'Aréine": Against all floods

Rue Mère-Dieu, 4000 Liège



*Keeping your feet dry*. The "aréines" are an (invisible) trace of a constant struggle for the city of Liège since the 13th century. Substantial underground devices designed to drain the hills they cross to exploit the coal deposits, the "aréines" were also used to carry drinking water to the city centre. To prevent Liège from becoming Venice, these efforts continue today through a series of more modern drainage measures. Even if we keep the water at bay, we also love it: just a few decades ago, public baths lined the Meuse

River as people bathed in its stream. Today, although you can still hear the water flowing, the outlet of the areine (called "Oeil" - the eye) is hidden by a dreary grille. For the curious, another "aréine" located just a stone's throw away (under the glass tower on your left), is accessible on request at the entrance to the Museum of Walloon Life.

### 13. Montagne de Buiren: the Everest of Liège

Montagne de Buiren, 4000 Liège



and steepness of the Montagne de Buiren, you need to feel your muscles warming up and your breathing quickening with each step. If you climb and descend this "extreme staircase" 132 times, you will have climbed the equivalent of the Mount Everest! Paved with flowers in June, covered with candles in October, but also decorated with the Palestinian flag in March 2024 - very briefly, due to the diligence of the public cleaning services - the Buiren stairs are alive in the minds and legs of the people

of Liège. They are also alive in their memories; every five years, they welcome hundreds of walkers dressed in period costume who come to pay tribute to Vincent de Buiren, one of the "Six Hundred Franchimontois" who marched from Tisoux to Liège on the night of 29 to 30 October 1468 in the hope of overthrowing Charles the Bold, in vain. But with bravery. If you're lacking such courage, take the Impasse des Ursulines, resist the malty call of the former Beguinage du Saint-Esprit (now a brewery) and continue to the Terrasse des Minimes: the lowest viewpoint in Liège!

### 14. Le Hangar: The prolific underground of the Saint-Léonard district

Quai Saint-Léonard 43b, 4000 Liège

*Alternative afterlives*. At the Marengo tram stop, heading towards Coronmeuse, the unsuspecting passer-by might walk right past this slightly graffiti'd black gate. An old warehouse with many lives (brewery, mill), renovated through crowdfunding in 2004, Le Hangar has become a place for parties and culture, located on the site of a former industrial chimney dating from the early 19th century. Located in the Saint-Léonard district, whose spirit it perfectly embodies, those who take care of this alternative cultural venue set the tone: "as long as you are there,



we will be there" (Hangar ASBL), whether it is to meet, exchange ideas in words, sounds or ephemeral works. A place where ideas flow (including the World Ugly Christmas Sweater Championship), it is the go-to venue for partygoers, dancers, music lovers and artists of all kinds.

### 4. The liberating arts of the Trinkhall

Parc d'Avroy 1, 4000 Liège

*All artists break the mould*. Located in the heart of Parc d'Avroy, a futuristic metal building hosts this social cooperative - also called MAD Café - where time flows more slowly. Here, you can watch snail races on National Day and enjoy weekly music concerts, sometimes beneath a bandstand adorned with a disco ball solar system. The Trinkhall also hosts works by Créahm, which showcase art forms produced by people with mental disabilities, and offers meaningful projects for people with 'special' (Trinkhall) life experiences. Yet, they

ask: what constitutes a 'special' life experience? What constitutes 'marginal' or 'differentiated' art? The Trinkhall and Créahm aim to break the rules and reject the system of normalisation of behaviour, existence, work and emotions. "It is neither 'the art of the insane' (Prinzhorn, for example) nor 'art brut' (Dubuffet)" (Créahm), but rather new forms of creation that immediately resonate with the entire artistic field and, above all, that cannot be defined.



### 5. Artificial vanilla from the Botanical Garden Greenhouses

Rue Fusch 3, 4000 Liège



*Scientific biopiracy*. The Botanical Garden greenhouses were founded in 1841, initially on Place Cockerill, before

being moved here to Bas Laveu in 1938. They are currently managed by the Wallonia Public Service in collaboration with the Liège Environment Centre. Like many botanical gardens of the time, Liège imports, exploits and reproduces exoticism in our region by recreating different climates capable of accommodating thousands of plants from all over the world. Charles Morren, a professor of botany from the University of Liège, developed a method of artificial pollination of vanilla in 1836, which led to the first cultivation of vanilla plants outside Mexico

### 6. The forgotten air-raid shelter of the Cité Miroir

Place Xavier-Neujean 22, 4000 Liège

*Memory, war and modernity*. Designed by architect Georges Truffaut, alderman of Liège and member of the Resistance who died in April 1942, the Cité Miroir building was inaugurated one month after his death, still during the Nazi occupation. It was originally a public swimming pool, built on the second floor to accommodate the many buses that dropped off bathers on the ground floor. Closed in 2000 before being converted in 2014 into a cultural space managed by the



non-profit organisation MNEMA, the Cité Miroir hosts socially engaged exhibitions such as "Never Again"

- raising awareness of the horrors of deportation, "Degenerate Art According to Hitler", and "In Struggle: Stories of Emancipation" - underlining the social rights gained by the working class. Beneath the imposing building lies an authentic air-raid shelter used by residents during the bombing of Liège in 1944, which is currently being renovated to house a permanent exhibition on the victims of armed conflicts.

### 15. Welcome in Roture Libre

En face du numéro 37 de la Rue Puits en Sock, 4020 Liège



caused the death of a young boy who ran out of Rue Roture and was hit by a tram. Under a vaulted archway (an *àrveu* in Liège Walloon), it takes you to the place known as "en Roture", one of the most picturesque spots in Liège, opening onto Place Gabriel. A hotspot for Liège festivities (we recommend having a drink at the Petit Bougnat), it also hosts four days of celebrations on 15 August to mark the Assumption, when crowds and pekets (a local juniper berry liqueur) embody the fiery spirit of the city. Although devoid of nationalist claims, the Outremeuse

district, which became a Free Republic in 1927, maintains a Liège folklore closely linked to that of the Republic of Montmartre. Being a passer-by or a resident of the neighbourhood means "solemnly promising to work together to cultivate love and joie de vivre with a view to reviving the Gallic spirit. In order to ward off phillistines and ensure the happiness of our fellow human beings through Art, Joy and Kindness." (Mayors of the Free Communes).

### 16. Cyclerie-Caserne Fonck: slow mobility and retrained soldiers

Rue de la Commune 7 & Rue Ransonnet 2, 4020 Liège

*Arpentage*. Walking through this other part of the Outremeuse neighbourhood, you will discover numerous "potales" and many representations of Tchanchès and Nanessa, an iconic couple of miners from Liège folklore! In two small alleys perpendicular to Boulevard de la Constitution and cross it to reach the *Caserne Fonck*, a former monastery converted into military barracks for a cavalry regiment. These former barracks now welcome architecture and art students, as well as hundreds of Liège residents eager to discover new cultural works (theatre, dance, festivals, etc.) in another part of the building.

Then, return to Boulevard de la Constitution and cross it to reach the *Caserne Fonck*, a former monastery converted into military barracks for a cavalry regiment. These former barracks now welcome architecture and art students, as well as hundreds of Liège residents eager to discover new cultural works (theatre, dance, festivals, etc.) in another part of the building.



### 17. The community gardens of Thier-à-Liège and Bressoux

Rue Tribouillet, Rue Charles Gother 4000 Liège (Thier-à-Liège) et Rue Ernest Malvoz 63, 4020 Liège (Bressoux)



*Staying with the trouble*. A sparsely urbanised neighbourhood, Thier-à-Liège offers large green spaces and remarkable views of Liège. Formerly a garden-city destined for coal miners, today we stroll from slag heap to slag heap, witnesses to the city's mining past. In recent years, Thier-à-Liège residents have developed collective gardens there. Across the Meuse River, an even older (century-old) *community garden* is tucked away in the heart of Bressoux. It brings

together 27 nationalities and is the largest in Wallonia (more than 6 football pitches). These initiatives - which tie in with the *community garden* movement of the 1970s - offer new ways of collectively reclaiming urban space and cultivating social ties. Yet, reclaiming this space also means learning to 'stay with its polluted soil and the toxic residues of Liège's industrial past' (Haraway, 2016).

### 7. The psychedelic experience of the Pot-au-lait

Rue Sœurs-de-Hasque 9, 4000 Liège

*Metamorphic imaginaries*. Pass under the stone arch and look up at the wrought-iron sign welcoming you to the *Pot-au-lait*: a student dedication from 1979 to the pot carried by Perrette the milkmaid, the dreamer from Jean de La Fontaine's fable. Built on the site of a former convent for nuns from Hasselt ("Haske" in Wallon), it was taken over by students eager for an independent, cultural venue showcasing local artists. The co-production of the venue and its name invite us to reflect on the power of imagination and daydreaming. At Pot-au-lait, it's as if Perrette - Jean de La Fontaine's milkmaid - met Lewis

Carroll's Alice. It's hard to know where to look, and that's the whole



point: embrace the highly eccentric decor, described as trendy, marginal, militant, kitsch or gore. An invitation to revisit the inspiring psychedelic part of ourselves. Let yourself be

carried away by your daydreams, see where they take you... surely to the bottom of Perrette's burrow, on a walk with the white rabbit hidden somewhere in this strange place, where you enter with your senses on alert. This bar hosts curious visitors as well as regulars, offering them many affordable draught beers and musical themes. "Open from morning to morning", the people of Liège happily spend time here drinking the "chessuete" (last drink in Wallon), but not without first making a detour to the warm and venerable Taverne Saint Paul, dating from 1881 and located a few steps away.

### 8. The Academic Hall, older than Belgium itself

Place Cockerill 1, 4000 Liège



*Banner and ban*. The Academic Hall is the main building of the University of Liège, hosting the

Rector's Office and its various administrative services, located Place du XX Août. The building was donated by King Guillaume I in 1824, seven years after the inauguration of the University of Liège. Resisting its detractors who called it a "stilted" and "sad" building, the Academic Hall was listed as an exceptional heritage site in Wallonia in 1983 and is also part of the Blue Shield initiative, which aims to protect heritage in times of crisis. The interior fresco depicts King

Guillaume I, accompanied by various Greek deities, presenting a laurel wreath to the first graduates. There is also a Latin inscription meaning "This is how he himself crowns the laurel of hope for the sweet homeland". With the independence of Belgium, the homeland and its hopes would no longer be his responsibility just seven years later: the new state now free to reclaim the university institution and its premises. Ironic, isn't it?

### 9. Keep posted at La Grand Poste

Quai Sur-Meuse 19, 4000 Liège

*Stamping on the new economy*. On the banks of the Meuse, a stone's throw from the Salle Académique, a tower worthy of a Walt Disney castle catches the eye. It is a former post office, built in 1901 by the Liège architect Edmond Jamar in reference to the Palace of the Prince-Bishops and now listed - so admire the façade and the restored coats of arms, bearing the images of cities and figures of the time. Disused since the beginning of the millennium, the (neo-Gothic) building was taken over in 2016 by a Liège investment fund to convert it into a (neoliberal)



"totem of the creative district" (La Grande Poste). In this hub dedicated to bringing together start-ups and

incubators, "nomadic entrepreneurs" have replaced postmen and postage stamps have given way to the voices of students from the Faculty of Communication at ULiège and radio presenters from 48FM. Next to the shared offices (provided you have the right badge and access), there is a food market open to all foodies and a rooftop from which you can watch the barges sailing on the Meuse. Until recently it was possible to taste beers brewed directly in the basement; unfortunately, Brasseries de Liège was stamped by economic difficulties.

### 10. The Sentinels of Place Saint-Lambert

Place Saint-Lambert, 4000 Liège

*Tabula rasa? No pasaran!* Now a vast esplanade, Place Saint-Lambert bears the scars of both the revolutionary period at the end of the 18th century and the urban development requirements of the Glorious Thirty. In 1793, when the people of Liège demolished the imposing cathedral that stood there, it is the power of the Prince-Bishop that they sought to tear down. By the end of the 1960s, the car had become the new prince and was suffocating the city centre. Chronic congestion led the authorities to adopt a series of transformations to promote road traffic, gutting the heart of the city -



rich in archaeological remains - over several decades. In the early 1990s, a protest and occupation movement,

the "Sentinelles de la Place Saint-Lambert" (Sentinels of Place Saint-Lambert), brought together ardent defenders of heritage who organised themselves to "save the collective memory of Liège". The night-time intervention of bulldozers meant the end of the occupation. To bear witness, the Archéoforum was created in 2003, an underground museum showcasing the visible historical traces. Above ground, variations in the paving of the pedestrian zone reveal the layout of the former cathedral, marked by 16 metal columns in the locations where the cathedral's columns once stood.

### 11. Le Perron: Question(s) of identity

Place du Marché 35, 4000 Liège

*Symbol of the fiery spirit of the free people of Liège*. Historical descendants of the pillories in the former Principality of Liège, the perrons initially embodied the authority of the Prince-Bishops. They later became a symbol of autonomy for the cities when the Prince-Bishops' influence declined. It was there that laws and regulations were proclaimed before being enforced. Built in 1305, the monument has undergone many changes since then. Sometimes removed in opposition to the symbol of freedom it inspires, sometimes

knocked over by a storm, it has undergone several transformations: the original pinecone sculpture has not always been restored, and it is therefore possible to see two previous versions of the one located Place du Marché by visiting the Curtius Museum. Which is the 'real' Perron? It's hard to say, but whatever the case, this monument, listed as part of Wallonia's exceptional heritage, still occupies an important place in the hearts of the people of Liège. In fact, its stylised representation can be found in their city's coat of arms.



References and additional info on Spiral



Additional info on Interreg project GRACE

